

THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
of
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
presents

EXPLORATIONS

Sunday, November 17, 1974 at 8:00 p.m.
Convocation Hall, Arts Building

CONCERTINO FOR PIANO AND CHAMBER ORCHESTRA . . . Leos Janacek

Moderato
Piu mosso
Con moto
Allegro

(1854-1928)

Alexandra Munn, piano
Ernest Dalwood, soprano and sopranino clarinets
Eddy Bayens, bassoon
Gloria Ratcliffe, horn
Thomas Rolston, violin
Lawrence Fisher, violin
Michael Bowie, viola

QUARTET 74, for trombones Malcolm Forsyth
(Premiere Performance) (1936-)

Risoluto ma leggiero
Andante, ben ritmato
Rondo-Toccata: un poco hectico
trombone: Malcolm Forsyth
Robert Hamper
Ronald Morrill
bass trombone: Christopher Taylor

INTERMISSION

CANTICLE II, OP. 51: "Abraham and Isaac" Benjamin Britten
(1913-)

Andrea Mellis, mezzo soprano
Nigel Lemon, tenor
Julie Lemon, piano

QUINTET, OP. 57 Dimitri Shostakovich
(1906-)

Prelude
Fugue
Scherzo
Intermezzo
Finale

Isobel Moore, piano
Thomas Rolston, violin
Lawrence Fisher, violin
Michael Bowie, viola
Ryan Selberg, cello

Commentary by: Larry Cook

The next concert in this series will be on Sunday, January 19, 1975 at 8:00 p.m. The program will include works by Webern, Seiber, Sasonkin, Granados and Forsyth. Performers will include Merla Aikman (mezzo soprano), Ryan Selberg (cello), Edward Lincoln (piano), Ernesto Lejano (piano), Alfred Strombergs and Malcolm Forsyth (conductors), and vocal and instrumental ensembles.

PROGRAM NOTES

Janacek is Czechoslovakia's greatest composer. His reputation is secure and international in Europe, although North America has yet to experience many performances of his music, other than the *Sinfonietta*. He wrote nine operas, at least four of which are frequently heard in Europe today. Much of his life was spent developing his theory of speech rhythms which form the basis of his style in the operas. Another feature is the equality of man with wild animals, which are given souls and feelings, particularly in the opera *The Cunning Vixen*.

In 1925 he wrote to his friend Kamila, "Here I have composed a piano concerto, *Spring*. In it there are a cricket, midges, a roe-deer and stream—and a man."

The title *Spring* did not remain, but the composer wrote the following synopsis for a magazine in 1927:

"First Movement.

One spring day we prevented a hedgehog from getting to its lair spread with dry leaves in an old lime tree. He was cross but he toiled in vain.

He could not make it out. Thus my horn could also achieve nothing more than a single grumpy motif. Should the hedgehog have stood on his hind legs and sung a sorrowful song? The moment he stuck out his nose he was forced to pull it in again.

Second Movement

The squirrel was chatty (while jumping) from tree to tree among the branches.

But once in the cage, she screeched like my clarinet, but even so, to the great delight of the children, she twirled and danced round in circles.

Third Movement

With a bullying expression the stupid bulging eyes of the screech-owl, tawny-owl and other critical night-birds stare into the strings of the piano.

Fourth Movement

In the fourth movement everyone sits round discussing the new penny just as it was in the fairy-tale.

And the piano?

Someone has to be the organizer.

I believe that there should be three motifs in every movement."

* * * *

Quartet 74 is my second trombone quartet, the first dating from 1961. It is my belief that the trombone, with its archaic slide-mechanism, so different from anything other than the swanee-whistle, is best suited to going around in groups of its kind.

Though capable of a good deal of quick movement, the technique needs to be thoroughly understood by a composer before he ventures into anything more than the customary chorale-style of trombone writing.

The first movement is the most expansive in form, and has about it a certain aggressiveness which suits the instrument very well. It is also the most dissonant.

The second movement is a legato melody over a two-chord ostinato accompaniment. Eleven-eight meter is transformed into something very fluent and singing.

The finale is also in eleven-eight time, but here all symmetry is cast off. The result is an extremely difficult ensemble piece which has caused me to forswear any more eleven-eight music in the future.

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Benjamin Britten has written three *Canticles* (Still Falls the Rain, Abraham and Isaac, and My Beloved Spake), and there is a widely-held theory that they were inspired by the form of Purcell's extended dramatic vocal pieces. *Canticle II* for alto, tenor and piano was first performed by Kathleen Ferrier, Peter Pears and the composer in Nottingham in January of that year. The text was taken from the Chester Miracle Plays, which were also the source of Britten's *Noyes Fludde* written in 1957. In "Abraham and Isaac" the tenor sings the words of Abraham, the alto the words of Isaac, and a third voice, that of God, is created by the two voices together. The long slow arpeggios on the piano which occur whenever God speaks were later used to great effect in Britten's masterpiece, *War Requiem*.

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Composed in 1940 and premiered at the Moscow Festival of Soviet Music that year, the Piano Quintet, Op. 57, won instant acclaim as one of Shostakovich's most mature and significant works. The debut featured the brilliant pianism of the composer himself plus the superb "Beethoven Quartet", and the reception was so enthusiastic that the Scherzo and Finale had to be repeated.

The Quintet was written shortly after the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies and shows the composer's personality in a somewhat different light. Here he is more mellow and contemplative, preoccupied with the forms and techniques of the Baroque. He achieves also an almost classical transparency of piano style, eschewing the sometimes overblown writing of the Romantic piano quintet.

Architecturally the work strikes a pragmatic balance of shape and content. The five-movement cycle is symmetrically organized, with the outer four movements paired and the Scherzo standing as a contrasting centerpiece.

CANTICLE II - BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Text from The Chester Miracle Play

GOD SPEAKETH

Abraham! My servant Abraham,
Take Isaac, thy son by name,
That thou lovest the best of all,
And in sacrifice offer him to me,
Upon that hill there besides thee.
Abraham, I will that so it be,
For ought that may befall.

ABRAHAM RISETH AND SAITH:

Lord, to Thee is mine intent,
Ever to be obedient.
That son that Thou to me has sent
Offer I will to Thee
Thy bidding done shall be.

HERE ABRAHAM, TURNING TO HIS SON ISAAC, SAITH:
Make thee ready, my dear darling,
For we must do a little thing.

HERE ISAAC SPEAKETH TO HIS FATHER, AND TAKETH
A BUNDLE OF STICKS AND BEARETH AFTER HIS
FATHER.

Father, I am all ready.

Abraham: This woodë do on thy back it bring,
We may no longer abide.

Isaac: Father, I am all ready.

Abraham: A sword and fire that I will take,
For sacrifice behoves me to make;
God's bidding will I not forsake,
But ever obedient be.

Isaac: Father, I am all ready
To do your bidding most meekely,
And to bear this wood full bayn am I,
As you commanded me.

HERE THEY GO BOTH TO THE PLACE TO DO SACRIFICE.

Abraham: Now, Isaac son, go we our way
To yonder mount if that we may.

Isaac: My dear father I will essay,
To follow you full fain.

ABRAHAM BEING MINDED TO SLAY HIS SON ISAAC,
LIFTS UP HIS HANDS, AND SAITH THE FOLLOWING:

O! My heart will break in three,
To hear thy words I have pitye;
As Thou wilt, Lord, so it must be,
To Thee I will be bayn.

Lay down thy faggot, my own dear son.

Isaac: All ready father, lo, it is here.
But why make you such heavy cheer?
Are you anything adread?

Abraham: Ah! Dear God! That me is woe!

Isaac: Father if it be your will,
Where is the beast that we shall kill?

Abraham: Thereof, son, is none upon this hill.

Isaac: Father, I am full sore affeared
To see you bear that drawne sword.

Abraham: Isaac, son, peace, I pray thee,
Thou breakest my heart even in three.

Isaac: I pray you, father, layn nothing from
me,

But tell me what you think.

Abraham: Ah! Isaac, I must thee kill!

Isaac: Alas! Father, is that your will,
Your owne child for to spill
Upon this hill's brink?

If I have trespassed in any degree,
With a yard you may beat me;
Put up your sword, if your will be
For I am but a child.

Would God my mother were here with me!
She would kneel down upon her knee,
Praying you, father, if it may be,
For to save my life.

Abraham: O Isaac, son, to thee I say
God hath commanded me today
Sacrifice, this is no nay,
To make of thy bodye.

Isaac: Is it God's will I shall be slain?
Abraham: Yea, son, it is not for to layn.

HERE ISAAC ASKETH HIS FATHER'S BLESSING ON HIS
KNEES, AND SAITH:

Father, seeing you muste needs do so,
Let it pass lightly and over go;
Kneeling on my knees two,
Your blessing on me spread.

Abraham: My blessing, dear son, give I thee
And thy mother's with heart free;
The blessing of the Trinity,
My dear son, on thee light.

HENCE ISAAC RISETH AND COMETH TO HIS FATHER,
AND HE TAKETH HIM, AND BINDETH AND LAYETH
HIM ON THE ALTAR TO SACRIFICE HIM, AND SAITH:

Come hither, my child, thou art so
sweet,

Thou must be bound both hands and feet.

Isaac: Father, do with me as you will,
I must obey, and that is skill,
Godes commandment to fulfil,
For needs so it must be.

Abraham: Isaac, blessed must thou be.

Isaac: Father, greet well my brethren ying,
And pray my mother of her blessing,
I come no more under her wing,
Farewell forever and aye.

Abraham: Farewell, my sweete son of grace.

HERE ABRAHAM DOTH KISS HIS SON ISAAC, AND BINDS
A KERCHIEF ABOUT HIS HEAD.

Isaac: I pray you, father, turn down my face,
For I am sore adread.

Abraham: Lord, full loth were I him to kill!

Isaac: Ah, mercy, father, why tarry you so?

Abraham: Jesu! On me have pity,
That I have most in mind.

Isaac: Now, father, I see that I shall die;
Almighty God in majesty!
My soul I offer unto thee!

HERE LET ABRAHAM MAKE A SIGN AS THOUGH HE WOULD
CUT OFF HIS SON ISSAC'S HEAD WITH HIS SWORD; THEN
GOD SPEAKETH.

Abraham! my servant dear, Abraham!
Lay not thy sword in no manner
On Isaac, thy dear darling.
For thou dreadest me, well wot I,
That of thy son has no mercy,
To fulfil my bidding.

Abraham: Ah, Lord of Heav'n and King of Bliss,
Thy bidding shall be done iwiss!
A horned wether here I see,
Among the briars tied is he,
To Thee offered shall he be
Anon right in this place.

THEN LET ABRAHAM TAKE THE LAMB AND KILL HIM.

Abraham: Sacrifice here sent me is,
And all, Lord, through Thy grace.

Abraham and Isaac: Such obedience grant us O Lord!
Ever to thy most holy word.
That in the same we may accord
As this Abraham was bayn;
And then altogether shall we
That worthy King in Heaven see,
And dwell with Him in great glorye
Forever and ever, Amen.